

The Conant-Payson Block

30 Exchange Street, Portland



Significance

The Conant-Payson Block was built in 1866 in the Italianate style by Alvah Conant, a merchant, and Henry M. Payson, a broker. It was the first structure to be rebuilt on Exchange Street after the downtown was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1866. Like its neighbors, the building has an exuberant Victorian facade featuring ornate brick work and cast iron columns and Corinthian capitals. It is a contributing building in the Portland Waterfront Historic District.

Project Scope

Over 150 years of exposure to Maine's harsh climate deteriorated the building's cast iron work and masonry façade. Parts of the cast iron capitals were falling off, so the owners had to remove them for safety reasons. In 2016, the building's owners since 1997, David and Randy Harrigan and Sylvie Montello, agreed that they wanted to restore the building's façade. They hired expert contractors to repoint and clean the masonry, restore the ornate cast iron capitals, and to paint the trim details. When a window sash failed, the owners spent 6 months searching for a contractor who could replicate the distinctive original windows. For the cast iron work, they discovered Standfast Works Forge years earlier when they observed them at work on a project across the street. Standfast found that almost all the original cast-iron capitals and design elements had been carefully saved, so that they could salvage and repair and re-cast the capitals and other details and bring the building back to its original appearance.

Recognition

The facade restoration of the Conant-Payson Block celebrates the building's original design and details. Through careful restoration techniques and the passion of the building owner, the project bolsters the strong architectural character of Exchange Street, one of the Old Port's most distinctive streetscapes.